



# NORTHEAST IDAHO

BONNEVILLE, BUTTE, CLARK, CUSTER, FREMONT, JEFFERSON, LEMHI, MADISON, & TETON COUNTIES

## EMPLOYMENT TRENDS

The seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for the Bonneville Labor Market Area (LMA) increased one-tenth of a percentage point over the month to 3.5 percent as seen in Northeast Table 1. Of the four counties in the LMA, Butte and Jefferson Counties both saw unemployment rate increases while Bingham and Bonneville Counties remained unchanged. Year-over-year, the LMA's rate decreased two-tenths of a percentage point with Bingham, Bonneville, and Jefferson Counties all contributing and Butte remaining unchanged. The unemployment rate for Idaho Falls, the largest city in the LMA, remained unchanged at 3.3 percent over the month, but decreased two-tenths of a percentage point over the year. The LMA's February rate was 1.3 percentage points lower than the state's rate of 4.8 percent and 2.4 percentage points lower than the national rate of 5.7 percent.

The other six counties in Northeast Idaho all experienced increases over the month with the exception of Lemhi County that decreased one-tenth of a percentage point. Clark County showed the largest percentage gain (up 1.5 percentage points to 6.2 percent). Custer County had the highest unemployment rate in Northeast Idaho at 7.6 percent. Madison County still had the lowest unemployment rate in the state at 1.8 percent. Year-over-year, all of the counties showed slight gains with the exceptions of Lemhi and Madison Counties, which both showed decreases.

*Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* decreased by 170 over the month to 63,650. Not surprisingly, *Construction* had the largest loss (130 jobs) due to the seasonal nature of the industry. *Retail Trade* showed a loss of 80 jobs, again due to the time of year. Gains were very minimal over the month with *Government Education* showing the greatest increase at 80 jobs. Year-over-year, *Nonfarm Payroll Jobs* increased by almost 1,100. *Construction* added 250 jobs with both commercial and residential

Northeast Idaho Table 1: Labor Force & Employment  
Bonneville, Bingham, Butte, and Jefferson Counties

	Feb 2004*	Jan 2004	Feb 2003	% Change From Last Month	Last Year
<b>INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE</b>					
<b>Seasonally Adjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	85,150	85,010	83,390	0.2	2.1
Unemployment	2,980	2,920	3,090	2.1	-3.6
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.5	3.4	3.7		
Total Employment	82,170	82,090	80,300	0.1	2.3
<b>Unadjusted</b>					
Civilian Labor Force	83,140	83,250	81,240	-0.1	2.3
Unemployment	3,720	3,610	3,830	3.0	-2.9
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.5	4.3	4.7		
Total Employment	79,420	79,640	77,400	-0.3	2.6
<b>JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK</b>					
<b>Nonfarm Payroll Jobs** - NAICS</b>	63,650	63,820	62,580	-0.3	1.7
<b>Goods-Producing Industries</b>	9,010	9,140	9,300	-1.4	-3.1
Natural Resources & Mining	50	50	50	0.0	0.0
Construction	4,210	4,340	3,960	-3.0	6.3
Manufacturing	4,750	4,750	5,290	0.0	-10.2
Food Manufacturing	2,760	2,760	3,020	0.0	-8.6
Fabricated Metal Product Manufacturing	250	260	240	-3.8	4.2
Machinery Manufacturing	400	400	430	0.0	-7.0
Other Manufacturing	1,340	1,330	1,600	0.8	-16.3
<b>Service-Providing Industries</b>	54,640	54,680	53,280	-0.1	2.6
Trade, Transportation & Utilities	14,990	15,060	14,550	-0.5	3.0
Wholesale Trade	5,170	5,180	4,990	-0.2	3.6
Retail Trade	7,990	8,070	7,810	-1.0	2.3
Utilities	120	110	110	9.1	9.1
Transportation	1,710	1,700	1,640	0.6	4.3
Information	910	910	940	0.0	-3.2
Financial Activities	2,170	2,170	2,110	0.0	2.8
Professional & Business Services	11,700	11,750	11,320	-0.4	3.4
Educational & Health Services	6,680	6,650	6,220	0.5	7.4
Leisure & Hospitality	4,990	5,000	4,860	-0.2	2.7
Other Services	2,010	2,030	2,290	-1.0	-12.2
Government Education	5,130	5,050	5,200	1.6	-1.3
Government Administration	6,060	6,060	5,790	0.0	4.7

\*Preliminary Estimate

\*\*Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

construction holding strong in all counties. *Professional & Business Services* added almost 400 jobs and *Educational & Health Services* added 460 jobs. *Government Administration* also added almost 300 jobs. *Trade, Transportation & Utilities* added 440 jobs with *Retail Trade* and *Wholesale Trade* adding almost 200 jobs each. *Manufacturing* showed the greatest loss (540 jobs) with both the *Food Manufacturing* and *Other Manufacturing* sectors contributing equally.

## AREA DEVELOPMENTS

### Bonneville County

- Idaho Falls was named as one of the top 10 emerging cities in a recent book, *Cities Ranked and Rated* by Bert Sperling and Peter Sander, which examined the newly designated Metropolitan Statistical Areas

(MSA's) throughout the nation. The book describes Idaho Falls as "Gateway to Yellowstone Park and the Tetons, but the town is 'nondescript' without 'much to do.'" The city plans to prove the last part of the description wrong. Idaho Falls has focused on cultural diversity for some time and is proud of what the city offers for its size (approximately 51,000). Area cities also cited as emerging include: Coeur d'Alene; Logan, Utah; Bend, Oregon; and Mount Vernon-Anacortes, Washington. The list was also published in **USA Today** in late March.

- Sam's Club in Idaho Falls is planning an expansion to add a one-hour photo department and vision center to bring it in line with the company's newer stores. Plans filed at the Idaho Falls Building Department call for an additional 25,000-square feet along with a gas station in the parking lot. Expansion should start in May and wrap up before the end of the year. The store will remain open to customers during construction.
- Idaho Falls School Board members voted to move classes from Westview Alternative High School to Emerson Elementary. Earlier this year, the board voted to close Emerson after the current school year because of budget limitations. Nearly 70 students attend Westview during the day and approximately 90 students take night classes at Skyline High School. Skyline has been accommodating some of Westview's students for night classes. Westview's current location south of town has been operating without a cafeteria, a library, or warm rooms in the winter. Soon it will have all three.
- Johnson Brothers Inc., a custom cabinet-making shop and specialty hardware store in Idaho Falls, experienced a loss the end of March when one of its five buildings caught fire. Fire officials were able to contain the fire and not much damage was done to other buildings. Although some new equipment had to be ordered, the company is still able to operate.
- Idaho Falls has a new eatery, Aussie Eats, located at 552 North Capital Avenue. The restaurant offers Australian food at very affordable prices (nothing on the menu is over \$3.00). Owner Brian Hall is from Queensland, Australia, and has been in the states since 1999. Aussie Eats is open Monday through Friday for breakfast and lunch.
- Ron Folsom, an Ammon resident since 1973 and a member of the city planning and zoning commission since 1988, was recently named to the new position of city planner. Ammon's projected growth prompted city officials to add the part-time position. Commercial development in Ammon has increased dramatically over the past several years, along with residential growth, adding to the need for a dedicated planner for the city.

## **Fremont County**

- The old St. Anthony City Hall recently was sold to Ohs Incorporated at auction for \$75,000. The hall has been used as a high school gym, a cafeteria, a scout meeting place, a senior's citizen center, a kindergarten, and is currently the town's public library. The new owner, Charles Ohs, will use it to expand his social services agency that is currently overflowing. The building is located at 110 West Main Street in St. Anthony. The change should take place in a few months when the public library moves out of the old city hall to the new city building at 420 North Bridge Street.

## **Jefferson County**

- Roberts held its groundbreaking ceremony for a new water system. Construction has already begun with completion planned for the end of July. The new \$1.7 million system is being funded by residents along with grants from the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Idaho Department of Commerce. The new system will replace antiquated lines and includes an additional 300,000-gallon steel reservoir to supplement the current 30,000-gallon reservoir. The new system should relieve such common problems as sand in the water, low water pressure, and boil orders.

## **Lemhi County**

- Salmon's downtown Rexall closed its doors in March after many decades in business. "You can only make it work if you have a lot of cash," said owner/manager Wayne McAtee regarding the closure. Salmon has had several blows throughout its history such as mining and lumber industry declines. But the most recent blows have been the fires in 2000; tourism slowdowns since September 2001; the stock market slump; the rise of Internet sales; and most recently, Idaho's sales tax hike to 6.0 percent when neighboring Montana has no sales tax. Montana also has a wealth of discount stores. Although many residents are worried about the affect these condition are having on retail as a whole, some employers continue to seek ways to compete. Questionnaires have been circulated around town to find out what merchants need and want. Other employers are offering 6.0 percent discounts at consistent times of the month to combat the absence of sales tax in Montana. Economic development that focuses on unique features of the town is still a priority. For example, the Lewis & Clark Celebration is still around the corner and hopes are high that the events will spur more opportunities.

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